



EXHIBIT 9
DATE 3/19/09
SB 337

National Parks Conservation Association
NORTHERN ROCKIES REGIONAL OFFICE

March 19, 2009

Testimony by Tim Stevens, Yellowstone Program Senior Manager for the National Parks Conservation Association, on SB337, a bill to prohibit the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks from relocating bison from the state-federal bison quarantine.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee:

On behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association and our 340,000 members nationwide and 2,500 members in Montana, I urge you to vote no on SB337. Founded in 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association works to protect and enhance America's national park system for present and future generations.

NPCA and our members care deeply about bison, an icon of America's National Parks and the West, and we have been working diligently to bring practical solutions to the table that will help resolve the confounding issues surrounding bison management and assure protection of Montana's Livestock industry. We support the dual goals of the Interagency Bison Management Plan: to protect Montana's livestock industry and also to provide for a free ranging bison herd.

Most recently, along with the leadership of state (including MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Department of Livestock) and federal agencies, private landowners and other non-governmental organizations, NPCA committed significant time and resources to help close a deal with landowners north of Yellowstone to meet a significant goal that was specified within the IBMP. The quarantine facility is also specified in the IBMP, but it is also important to note that the quarantine facility was developed by a host of state and federal wildlife professionals, twice reviewed by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission and the Board of Livestock and is also supported by APHIS and the US Animal Health Association as well as the 14 state and federal agencies that make up the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee.

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The quarantine facility provides a unique opportunity to seed small, brucellosis free groups bison-- the most important and unique bison herd in the world--onto other lands deemed appropriate within the state, including tribal lands where these animals will provide significant economic and cultural benefits.

We believe that the years of the operation of the quarantine facility has done what it intended to do as envisioned by the IBMP and state and federal managers—produce brucellosis free bison that are now available for transplant to other parts of the state where others, such as Tribal Governments, are waiting to receive them.

This is the correct course to follow, and we are therefore strongly opposed to this bill that would essentially shut this operation down. This is especially disconcerting given the time and commitment that has gone into producing these brucellosis free animals. Not only have these bison met and exceeded all standards required by APHIS for wildlife and livestock, but there are additional and significant monitoring requirements of these animals once they are transplanted. There is no risk associated with these quarantine bison.

Not only is the bison a symbol of the National Park System and our nation's first national park, but the presence of a healthy, abundant bison population is an economic boon to the Yellowstone region. Yellowstone is experiencing a significant growth in visitors who offer wildlife viewing as the primary reason for their visit. Fully 57% of Yellowstone's visitors cite seeing bison as their main reason for visiting the park and wildlife watchers spent \$82 million in the Yellowstone gateway region in 2004. NPCA would hope that populations of bison elsewhere in the state would bring similar tourism and hunting revenues.

For these reasons, on behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association I urge you to vote no on SB 337.

Sincerely,

Tim Stevens
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